



UNIT THREE



Chapter 11

THE BATTLE WITH APOLLYON

Reading Assignment from *The Pilgrim's Progress*

(Briefly review the preceding reading assignment before beginning this section.)

Christian left his hostesses at the Palace Beautiful and began to head down the hill, but Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence wanted to walk with him down to the bottom of the hill. So they all walked along together, repeating their earlier conversation, until they came to the bottom of the hill.

Christian As far as I can tell, it's going to be as hard going down this hill as it was to go up it.

Prudence Yes, it sure is. It's a hard thing for a man to go down into the valley of Humiliation, as you're doing now, and not slip along the way. That's why we came with you down the hill.

So Christian began to walk more carefully down the steep hill. He went very cautiously, but even at that he slipped once or twice. When he reached the bottom of the hill, his companions gave him a loaf of bread, a bottle of grape juice, and a cluster of raisins. Then he went on his way, and we find that

While Christian was among his godly friends,
Their golden mouths made him sufficient mends
For all his griefs; and when they let him go,
He's clad with northern steel from top to toe.

But in the valley of Humiliation, poor Christian was greatly tried because he had gone only a little way when he spied a foul fiend named Apollyon coming over the field to meet him. Christian began to be afraid and to wonder whether he should go back or stand his ground. But as he pondered what he should do, he remembered that he didn't have any armor for his back, so to turn his back to the fiend

would only make it easier for him to pierce him with his darts. So he determined to take his chances and stand his ground. I have only one purpose, he thought, and that is to save my life. It will be best to stand my ground. So he kept going forward on his way, and Apollyon met him.

Apollyon was a hideous sight. He had scales like a fish, and he was very proud of them. He had wings like a dragon and feet like a bear. Fire and smoke came from his belly. And his mouth was like that of a lion. When he came up to Christian, he looked at him disdainfully and began to question him.

Apollyon Where did you come from? Where are you going?

Christian I'm from the city of Destruction, the place of all evil, and I'm going to the city of Zion.

Apollyon Well, I believe that you're one of my subjects because all of that country is mine. I'm the prince and the god of it. So how is it that you've run away from your king? If not for the fact that I think that you can still be of service to me, I'd strike you down to the ground with one blow right now.

Christian It's true that I was born in your dominions, but your work was hard and your wages were not enough for a man to live on because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). So, when I became old enough to understand, I did what other thinking people do—I determined to improve my condition.

Apollyon There's no prince on earth who would lose his subjects without putting up a fight, and neither will I lose you. But since you complained of your service and wages, be content to go back, and I promise here and now that whatever our country can afford I'll give to you.

Christian But I've hired myself out to another master, even to the King of princes. In all fairness, then, how can I go back with you?

Apollyon You've done just like the proverb says: "Changed a bad for a worse." But it's not unusual for those who have professed themselves to be His servants after a while to give Him the slip and return to me again. You do this, too, and everything will be okay.

Christian I've given Him my faith, and I've sworn allegiance to Him, so how can I go back on my word without being hanged as a traitor?

Apollyon You did the same thing to me, yet I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, forgive and forget—if you'll just turn around and come back to me.

Christian The promise I made to you was when I was too young to understand what I was doing. Besides, I believe that the Prince whom I now serve is able to clear me of that crime and, yes, even to grant me a full pardon for what I did in your service. And besides all that, Apollyon, to tell you the truth, I like His wages, His servants, His company, and His country a whole lot better than yours. So, quit trying to persuade me further. I am His servant, and I will follow Him!

Apollyon Ah, think about it again when you're in a cooler mood and not so angry. Think about what types of things you're likely to meet with in the way you're heading. You know that for the most part His servants come to a bad end because they're traitors to me and my ways. An awful lot of them have been executed and died shameful deaths! Besides, you count His service better than mine, but He never yet came from the place where He is to deliver anyone who served Him out of their enemies' hands. Instead, He let them die! But the whole world knows that I have often delivered from Him, either by power or by fraud, those who have faithfully served me! I'll deliver you just like that, too.

Christian My king doesn't deliver them right away because He's testing their love to determine if they will cleave to Him right up to the bitter end. As for the bad end that you say they come to, that's an excellent thing on their account. They don't expect deliverance now because they endure hardship for a later glory. And they'll have it, too, when their Prince comes in His and the angels' glory.

Apollyon You've already been unfaithful in your service to Him. How do you expect to receive wages from Him?

Christian What?! In what have I been unfaithful to him, Apollyon?

Apollyon You fainted shortly after you first set out, when you were almost choked in the Slough of Despond. You tried all the wrong ways to get rid of your burden. You should have stayed there until your Prince took it off. You sinfully slept and lost your most valuable possession. You were almost persuaded to go back at the mere sight of the lions. And when you talked of your journey and of what you had seen and heard, you were inwardly desiring praise and glory from those who heard you. You were serving yourself in everything you said and did.

Christian Yes, all that you've said is true—and there's much more that you've left out. But the Prince I serve and honor is merciful and ready to forgive. Besides, these problems were all things I experienced when I was in your country. It was there that I was sucked in by them, and I've groaned under them and been sorry for them and have obtained a pardon from my Prince.

Then Apollyon broke into a terrible rage.

Apollyon I'm an enemy to this Prince! I hate His person, His laws, and His people! I've come out for the express purpose of opposing you!

Christian Apollyon, beware what you do because I'm in the King's highway, the way of holiness. So watch yourself!

Apollyon straddled the whole width of the path.

Apollyon I'm not afraid of anything or anyone! Prepare to die! I swear by my infernal den that you will go no farther. I'll spill your soul right here!

With that, he threw a flaming dart at Christian's chest, but Christian had his shield in his hand, and he deflected it and wasn't hurt. Then he drew his sword because he saw that it was time for a fight.

Apollyon lunged at him, throwing darts as thick as hail. And despite all that Christian could do to protect himself, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and his foot. This flurrying of blows caused Christian to retreat a little.

And Apollyon pursued him quickly. Christian took courage and fought back as manfully as he could.

Their brutal combat lasted for more than half a day until Christian was almost exhausted. Because of his wounds, Christian had to be growing weaker and weaker as the fight stretched on.

Then Apollyon saw his chance. He began to press close up to Christian and, wrestling with him, flung him hard to the ground. Christian's sword flew out of his grasp.

Apollyon I've got you now!

And he almost pressed Christian to death, but by God's plan, while Apollyon was inflicting his last fateful blow with which he hoped to finish off Christian, Christian reached out his hand and grabbed his sword.

Christian Don't rejoice against me, yet, you fiendish enemy! When I fall, I shall arise (Micah 7:8)!

With that, he gave a vigorous thrust with his sword, forcing Apollyon to retreat like someone who has received a mortal wound. Seeing that, Christian attacked him again, saying,

Christian Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).

Suddenly, Apollyon spread out his dragon wings and sped away, and Christian didn't see him any more (James 4:7).

During this battle, you can't imagine—unless you had heard or seen it as I did in my dream—what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made throughout the fight. He spoke like a dragon. And as for Christian, he sighed and groaned terribly in his heart. I never saw him at any time give so much as one pleasant look until he saw that he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, he did smile and looked upward! But that battle was the most dreadful sight that I ever saw.

When the battle was over, Christian said,

Christian I'll give thanks right here to Him who has delivered me from the mouth of the lion, to Him who helped me against Apollyon. And he did so, saying,

Great Beelzebub, the captain of this fiend,
Designed my ruin; therefore to this end
He sent him harnessed out; and he, with rage
That hellish was, did fiercely me engage:
But blessed Michael helped me, and I,
By dint of sword, did quickly make him fly:
Therefore to Him let me give lasting praise,
And thank and bless His holy name always.

Then a hand appeared holding some leaves from the tree of life. Christian took them and put them on the wounds that he had received during the battle, and he was healed immediately. He sat down there and ate some bread and drank some of the juice that his friends had given him that morning. Being refreshed and strengthened by these things, he continued on his journey with his sword drawn and in his hand.

Christian I don't know but what some other enemy might be at hand.

But he met no other attack from Apollyon through the rest of the valley.

STUDENT WORK

Every Christian has slightly different experiences in life. That's also the way it is in *The Pilgrim's Progress* with Christian and his wife, Christiana. To Christian, the descent from the hill Difficulty to the Valley of Humiliation is difficult and dangerous. The valley (when he gets there) becomes the site of one of the fiercest battles he has in the course of his journey to the Celestial City.

Yet, this valley is not perilous to all pilgrims. In part two of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (not included in your textbook), Christiana describes it as a fruitful place, "the best and most fruitful piece of ground in all these parts." It consists of meadows and green valleys, "beautiful with lilies; filled with sheep, and resounding

with the pastoral songs of the shepherds; and its chiefest glory is, that it was the chosen dwelling place of Jesus, the Lord of all.”

But to Christian, the Valley of Humiliation is a place of awful conflict. If one studies Christiana’s experience, Christian seems to have wandered into a dangerous part of the valley called Forgetful Green, where he is exposed to the assault of the great foe, Apollyon.

Lesson: When we get our eyes off of the Lord, and forget momentarily what He has done for us, we become vulnerable (as a defenseless lamb) to the lion (Satan), who goes about “seeking whom he may devour.”

The Valley of Humiliation

From the great heights of the hill Difficulty, Christian goes down to the Valley of Humiliation. God has both the high ways and the low ways for the Christian. The high ways encourage us to press forward; the low ways keep us from thinking that we can make it in our own strength.

Someone has said that humility is produced by a vision of God. Christian has just learned much about his Lord in the Palace Beautiful, and this knowledge humbles him because it reminds him of his own weaknesses, his own sinful nature, and his own total dependence upon God’s Help

Some people think that the man who claims friendship with the God of the universe should never walk in humility. They say that he should lift his head high and feel as though he has been exalted above most other men. Perhaps this is exactly what Christian does. He steps out of the Palace Beautiful “heady.” He thinks that no one can whip him. Therefore, he soon forgets his great God. He will soon learn an unforgettable lesson.

Humility is evidenced by the following four proofs.

Reverence

The first step of humility is a reverence for and a holy awe of God. At this point, Christian does not have this reverence, although he loves the Lord. His suit of armor and his new knowledge of the Word are all that he needs—or so he thinks. He will emerge from this valley with a new reverence for God.

Confession of Sin

When one reveres God in all of His power, glory, and holiness, he automatically sees his own sinfulness and begins confessing his sin. Christian has at times admitted his sinfulness:

1. Before he was saved, he spoke of his awful burden of sin.
2. He admitted his sin to the porter, confessing, “I would have been here sooner, but, wretched man that I am, I slept in the arbor that stands on the hillside.” However, the vision of God that gave him this attitude has now slipped from his mind.

Lowly Mindedness

- Humble souls express the thought of the pilgrim when he said to Goodwill about Pliable, “I don’t think there’s any difference between him and me in that regard.” Again, at the wicket–gate, the pilgrim is amazed that they would receive someone like him. He had truly obeyed Philippians 2:3, which states, “...but in

.”

Gratitude

Someone has said, “Gratitude is the flower of which humility is the root.” Christian has shown gratitude numerous times, including the following.

1. At the Wicket–Gate

“What a favor it is that I’m still admitted entrance here.”

2. At the Arbor upon Finding His Lost Roll

“He thanked God for directing his eye to the spot where the roll lay....”

3. At the Palace Beautiful

“But, thank God, I’m here. Thank you for receiving me.”

- He once more returns to a humble attitude and falls on his knees after the encounter with Apollyon. What does he say that shows his humility by way of a grateful spirit?

And thank and bless His holy name always.”

Augustine said, “Well nigh the whole substance of Christian discipline is humility.” If one is to live a disciplined life for his Master and Lord, he must be humble. This truth can easily be seen when we apply the following four elements of humility.

1. If one does not revere, respect, and fear God, he will not discipline himself to follow Him.
2. If one is not aware of his own sinfulness and total need of Christ to fight for him, he will not follow the Lord.
3. If one is not lowly minded (i.e., if one thinks himself to be something great), he will not discipline himself to follow his Lord. He thinks, Why do I need Him? I can make it on my own!”
4. If one is not grateful to God for what He has done for him, he will have no motive or inward urging to follow the Lord.

Thus, Christian discipline is impossible apart from humility.

Apollyon

His Identity

- Read Revelation 9:11. Describe who Apollyon is according to the passage:
- His position—
- He was king over what creatures (Rev. 9:1–11)?
- His name in Hebrew is
- His name in Greek is

Thus, this part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* depicts a conflict with the powers of hell and with Satan himself.

His Description

The name Apollyon means “the destroyer.” Thus, we see that side of Satan that seeks to destroy the testimony, influence, and—if possible—the life of a Christian.

Describe Apollyon according to the story.

- His Clothing—
- His Wings— indicating his speed of attack.
- His Feet— (for softness of tread, allowing him to attack by surprise, and for strength and power to injure)
- His Mouth— to kill and to devour.
- His Breath— representing the inner fire that burns within the breast of the fallen Lucifer.

His Tactics

- Apollyon doesn't begin his attack with a shocking, crushing, lightning-fast blow, like the Nazi blitzkrieg of early World War II, but with tempting questions that raise doubts in one's mind. Note how he did the same with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. What was his first question of Eve?

- His sole purpose in asking this question was to get her to doubt God. He tries the same tactic on Christian in the Valley of Humiliation. What does he first ask Christian?

- His purpose is to convince the pilgrim that he belongs to him. It's the old temptation that Satan still uses: "You're not good enough to be God's child. Why don't you quit pretending. Look at all of your failures. You'll never be like those saints. Give up and forget it. Get back to your home where you belong." He reminds the pilgrim of his many sins as evidence that he has no business trying to act like a Christian. What sins does he recall to the pilgrim?

- Here, as is stated in Revelation 12:10, we see Satan enjoying his role as the . His tactic is always the same. First, he seeks to get a Christian to doubt God's Word or his own salvation. Failing there, he flies into a rage and seeks by wrathful means to accomplish the same purpose.

Christian

Two great characteristics are prominent in Christian in this episode: his faith and his courage.

His Faith

- At first, Christian starts to run from Apollyon. This initial reaction is further evidence that he has temporarily forgotten his Lord. Still thrilled with the blessings of the Palace Beautiful, he has not "come back down to earth" and is jolted by the realization of his weakness by the sudden appearance of Satan (Apollyon). However, he soon recovers and defends his Lord against the lies of Satan. He then states boldly, "I believe that the Prince

- Apollyon then reminds him of the hundreds of Christians who have been killed trying to follow the Lord, yet God did not save any of their lives. Instead, He let them be slaughtered! What does Christian answer to this

accusation that shows his faith?

- Apollyon begins the actual attack by throwing a flaming dart at Christian's chest. How does Christian fend it off?
- According to Ephesians 6:16 what does that represent?

His Courage

Christian's courage is rooted in his faith. If he had not had faith in the power and watchcare of his God, he would not have had the courage required to face such an awesome foe.

Courage consists of the following three characteristics.

1. Resolution—A Determination to Press on at All Costs

- At the first sight of Apollyon, Christian is afraid. Yet, upon further thought concerning the greatness of his God, he “determined to .
- We see the same resolution to go on regardless of the danger as he neared the top of the hill Difficulty and was warned by Timorous and Mistrust about the two lions. At first, he was afraid, but he determined to venture on, and eventually he got past them unharmed.

2. Fearlessness Though Afraid

- Someone has said, “Real courage is not the absence of fear but the courage to go ahead when you are afraid.” Anyone can move forward when he or she is not afraid. It is showing fearless conduct outwardly when one is fearful inside that is the true sign of courage. Christian frankly admitted his fear of the lions, but he pressed forward anyway. Apollyon, too, fright-

ens Christian, yet note his fearless words: “Apollyon, beware what you do

So watch yourself!”

What brave, courageous words! And his heart was beating ninety miles an hour for fear!

3. Fortitude (Endurance)

- Endurance is stored courage. Christian—although he was wounded, flung to ground, weak from bleeding, and having lost his sword—did not give up! His courage is seen in his nimbly grabbing his sword and giving Satan a decisive thrust. What words from Romans 8 does he then quote as he wins the battle?

- Thus, his courage, firmly rooted in his deep faith in the power of God, wins the day. “May God give you the faith and courage to stand,” as Ephesians 6:11 says, “against the .
- Remember, it was by the sword that Satan fell. As we hide God’s Word in our heart, record it, and then quote it back to Satan when he attacks us, we have victory. What does Psalm 17:4 say about this?

NOTES FROM THE TEACHER’S LESSON

The Reality of Satan

His Origin and Purpose

- Satan Was (Ezek. 28:13)
- He Was Named Lucifer—
- He Was Created to and God

- Cherub—Created to God
 - Covering Cherub
 - Anointed—

His Characteristics

- Wisest
- Most
- Greatest

His Fall (Ezek. 28:16–17)—

The of Satan

- Deceit (Rev. 12:9)
- Perversion
 - Truth
 - Morals
 - Will of God
- Imitation (2 Cor. 11:13–15)
- Rebellion (2 Thess. 2:1–12)
- Entrapment (1 Peter 5:8)

The of Satan

APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

1. Read C. S. Lewis's little book *The Screwtape Letters*. List the various methods that the character Screwtape suggests will help his nephew Wormwood successfully tempt his Christian victim. Make another list of the practical lessons that you learn from reading this book.
2. Read *flambeau@darkcorp.com*, Don Hawkins' modernized takeoff on C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*. List the methods of temptation included in that book. Then list the lessons you can apply to your own life from that book.

3. Using a commentary and a concordance, conduct a study of Ephesians 6:10–18 and share your findings with the class either orally or in writing.
4. Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the column on the left, list the ways in which Satan most frequently tempts you. In the column on the right, list ways by which you may resist those temptations. Include Scripture references that you can use in your resistance program.